Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. The amendments find full support in the claims and/or specification as originally filed.

Listing of Claims:

1. **(Currently Amended)** A method ~~for initiating communication in real-time between users in a multi-user communication environment, the method~~ comprising:

limiting communication between users in a multi-user communication environment to a menu-driven system of pre-prepared chat messages until an authenticated relationship is established between the users;

providing a unique code generated by ~~a~~ the multi-user communication environment to a first user in the multi-user communication environment ~~during communication between the first user an at least one other user via an exchange of words from a menu of predetermined words between the first user and the at least one other user, the code being transmitted from the first user to the at least one other user via a mode outside of the multi-user communication environment~~; and

~~initiating secure~~ enabling free form communication between the first user and a second user in response to establishing the authenticated relationship between the first user and the second user ~~the users upon the unique code being authenticated in the multi-~~

~~user communication environment after the unique code is submitted to the multi-user~~

~~communication environment from the at least one other user~~;

wherein:

the authenticated relationship comprises an association of the unique code with the first user and the second user;

the authenticated relationship is established between the first user and the second user in response to receipt by the multi-user communication environment of the unique code from the second user; and

the unique code is not transmissible between the first user and the second user via the multi-user communication environment.

2. **(Currently Amended)** The method according to claim 1, wherein the unique code is provided to the first user by the multi-user communication environment.

3. **(Original)** The method according to claim 2, wherein the multi-user communication environment is an online multiplayer gaming environment.

4. **(Currently Amended)** The method according to claim 1, wherein the unique code is transmitted by the first user to the second user through at least one of an email program, a telephone conversation, a handwritten note, a chat room program, direct communication, a instant message program, and a facsimile.

5. **(Currently Amended)** The method according to claim ~~1~~ 3, wherein the first user initiates real-time and secure communication with the ~~at least one other~~ second user after the unique code is authenticated in the multi-user environment; and further wherein the pre-prepared chat messages correspond to one or more gaming functions.

6. **(Original)** The method according to claim 1, wherein the code comprises a sequence of symbols.

7. **(Original)** The method according to claim 1, wherein the code comprises a sequence of alpha-numeric symbols.

8.-23. **(Cancelled)**

24. **(Currently Amended)** A computer readable media having instructions for facilitating communication in real-time between users in a multi-user communication environment, the instructions performing steps comprising:

~~allowing the two users to communicate within the multi-user communication environment by selecting from a menu of pre-determined words;~~

limiting communication between users in a multi-user communication environment to a menu-driven system of pre-prepared chat messages until an authenticated relationship is established between the users;

providing a unique code generated by the multi-user ~~communications~~ communication environment to a first user in the multi-user ~~communications~~ communication environment ~~while the predetermined word communications are being~~

~~exchanged between the users, wherein the unique code transmitted from the first user to the at least one other user is transmitted via a mode outside of the multi-user communication environment~~; and

enabling the free form communications between the <u>first user and a second user in response to establishing the authenticated relationship between the first user and the second user</u> ~~users upon the unique code being authenticated in the multi-user communication environment after the unique code is submitted to the multi-user communication environment from the at least one other user~~<u>;</u>

<u>wherein:</u>

<u>the authenticated relationship comprises an association of the unique code with the first user and the second user;</u>

<u>the authenticated relationship is established between the first user and the second user in response to receipt by the multi-user communication environment of the unique code from the second user; and</u>

<u>the unique code is not transmissible between the first user and the second user via the multi-user communication environment</u>.

25. **(Previously Presented)** The computer readable media according to claim 24, wherein the unique code is a random sequence of symbols generated by the multi-user communication environment.

26. **(Previously Presented)** The readable media according to claim 24, wherein the multi-user environment is an online multiplayer gaming environment.

27. **(Currently Amended)** The readable media according to claim [[24]] 26, wherein the unique code is provided to the first user in response to a request by the first user one of the two users; and further wherein the pre-prepared chat messages correspond to one or more gaming functions.

28. **(Previously Presented)** The computer readable media according to claim 24, wherein the unique code is valid for a limited period of time.

29-43. **(Cancelled)**

44. **(Previously Presented)** A method for initiating free form communication between a plurality of users in a multi-user gaming environment via an exchange of words selected from a menu of predetermined words determined by the gaming environment, the method comprising:

establishing predetermined word communication via an exchange of words selected from the menu between a first user and at least one second user in the multi-user gaming environment;

providing a unique code generated by the multi-user gaming environment to the first user in the multi-user gaming environment during the exchange of words selected from the menu of predetermined words between the first user and the at least one second user;

transmitting the unique code to the at least one second user via a mode outside of the multi-user gaming environment;

receiving the unique code from the at least one second user; and

the environment permitting the first and at least second users to thereafter communicate via free form secure communication when the code has been authenticated by the multi-user gaming environment.

45. **(Previously Presented)** The method of claim 44 wherein the menu of predetermined words includes a predetermined set of word commands.

46. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 44, wherein the unique code is provided in response to a request by one of the users.

47. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 44, wherein the unique code is valid only for a limited time.

48-58. **(Cancelled)**

59. **(New)** An apparatus comprising:

one or more processors; and

a computer readable storage medium, in operable connection with the one or more processors, having a program of instructions executable by the one or more processors, the program of instructions comprising:

code configured to limit communication between users in the multi-user online game to a menu-driven system of pre-prepared chat messages until an authenticated relationship is established between the users, the menu-driven system of pre-prepared chat messages comprising a set of pre-prepared chat messages associated with one or more game actions of the multi-user online game.

60. **(New)** The apparatus according to claim 59, wherein the program of instructions further comprises:

code configured to enable establishment of the authenticated relationship between users; and

code configured to enable free form communication between a first user and a second user in response to establishing the authenticated relationship between the first user and the second user, wherein the authenticated relationship is established via exchange of a secret code between the users;

wherein the menu-driven system of pre-prepared chat messages prevents transmission of the secret code between the first user and the second user via the multi-user online game.

61. **(New)** The apparatus according to claim 60, wherein the code configured to enable establishment of the authenticated relationship between users further comprises:

code providing a first user the secret code in response to a request of the first user for the secret code; and

code for receiving and authenticating the secret code from the second user.

62. **(New)** The apparatus according to claim 59, wherein the pre-prepared chat messages are restricted to a stored library configured to essentially eliminate certain communications between the users.

63. **(New)** The apparatus according to claim 59, wherein the menu-driven system of pre-prepared chat messages further comprises:

a first menu of pre-prepared chat messages provided to a first user in a first language, the first menu of pre-prepared chat messages being associated with identifiers;

a second menu of pre-prepared chat messages provided to a second user in a second language, the second menu of pre-prepared chat messages being associated with the identifiers;

wherein the program of instructions further comprises:

code configured to permit communication between the first user and the second user via association of one or more pre-prepared chat messages in the first language with one or more pre-prepared chat messages in the second language via the identifiers.

64. **(New)** The apparatus according to claim 59, wherein the menu-driven system of pre-prepared chat messages is dynamically updated to reflect game tasks.